

MY 4 BIGGEST CHALLENGES

PATIENCE

Brother's Weekend 2017

- I have a booklet for everyone
- There are two pages for each of our four topics this Weekend
- The First Page is just to make any notes on that you would like – You can ignore it, if you'd like – But, I've found it helps me to pay attention
- The Second Page contains some questions for discussion later
- Of course, if you'd like a copy of my notes, or the slides, they are online

SLIDE

- Gelineau.org / Christian Living / Brothers Studies
- Nate asked for a title, so I told him to call it '*My 4 Biggest Challenges*'
- My original title was "*My 4 Biggest Sins*", but I didn't think anyone would be interested
- And, it didn't seem polite to call it "**YOUR** 4 Biggest Sins"
- Because, in all fairness, I don't know you – each one of us is different
- Each one of us struggles with different issues
- For example, I've never had any desire to Gamble, for example, but there are a lot of skinny gamblers out there
- So, I decided to get a little personal this weekend, and address some things that are very real challenges to me – You're going to hear me talking to myself a lot this weekend
- We're going to talk about some Issues that I continue to struggle with after being baptized for over 35 years

- I figure that I'm not the Lone Ranger on some of these, and hopefully our discussions this weekend will be helpful to many of you

SLIDE

- I want to start out this morning by talking about Patience
- My life has almost always been controlled by appointments on a Calendar
- In 1987 I bought my first Day Timer
- In 1997 I bought my first Palm Pilot
- In 2007 I bought my first iPhone
- I enjoy being busy and I keep my life very full
- In order to do that, I need to keep to a tight schedule
- In the process, I've developed a habit of not being very patient with people...
- I can easily justify this spiritually, as I get a lot of good stuff done for the Lord
- Our community places a lot of value on being productive and doing "*things*"
- Hard working people are the backbone of our Ecclesias
- And there is plenty of biblical support for this idea as well...
- For example, look at Colossians Chapter 3

SLIDE

- Colossians 3:23

23) Whatever you do, **work heartily**, as for the Lord and not for men

- Here's the problem...
- I'm sure that it's not the same for everyone, but for me I find that all of this busy-ness starts to get in the way of spirituality

- I tend to get focused on the **“things”** that I want to get done for my Ecclesia, and quickly start to forget the **“people”** that actually make up my Ecclesia
- *“Oh. Your Husband left you? I literally can’t talk to you about that right now, as I have to get home and work on my Bible Classes about Shepherding. – PAUSE - I can fit you in for about 45 to 60 minutes next Thursday night at 7:30. How does that sound?”*
- The Patience that I am trying to learn isn’t so much about learning how to sit quietly...
- What I am trying to learn is how to live more in the moment and to be there mentally and spiritually for the ones around me that I love
- I don’t want this schedule and calendar that I have created **to serve me** – To take over my life and control what kind of person that I am
- I fear that I have lost out on many valuable moments to help one of my Brothers or Sisters because I felt I had to be somewhere else working on something else
- Let’s be honest: I exhibit in my actions that I believe in my heart that the things that I have scheduled to do are more important than you are

SLIDE

- My calendar is **MORE IMPORTANT** to me than my Brothers and Sisters
- This verse continually convicts my conscience:

SLIDE

- Matthew 24:40

40) And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the **LEAST** of these my brothers, you did it to **ME.**’

SLIDE

- I justify my not being a very **GOOD** Brother to you by being a **BUSY** Brother

PAUSE

- I was fortunate enough to have a mentor for many years in Brother Wilfred Alleyne from Birmingham
- He was my very own personal Yoda... Because he was born in Guyana he had that awesome Caribbean accent and punctuated form of speaking...
- He said to me once, *“Don’t worry about being a Recording Brother. Don’t worry about being a Speaking Brother. Don’t worry about being an Arranging Board Member. **Just be.**”*
- Just be.

PAUSE

- It’s almost sounds like a foreign concept, doesn’t it?
- It’s kind of almost sounds blasphemous in a sense
- We **KNOW** that we have to be active in the work of the Lord
- We **KNOW** that we have a responsibility to the Brothers and Sisters of our Ecclesia to help them in their walk towards the Kingdom
- We **KNOW** that Faith without Works is dead

PAUSE

- Just **BE???**
- I think that too often we can get all wrapped up in the outworking of being a Christadelphian that we forget to be Christian
- To just be!
- Just be Patient
- Just be Kind
- Just be Good
- Just be Joyful

- Just be Loving
- Just be Gentle
- Just be Faithful
- **THAT** is what I'm trying to learn!
- Not to leave the one undone and do the other...
- But to work out how I can be an active, busy and productive Brother in Christ...

PAUSE

- And still be a Brother to Christ
- Be the kind of Brother that Christ wants me to be
- So maybe Patience isn't necessarily the right word, but I hope that you can relate to what my struggle is
- I want to be the kind of Brother that is there for you
- I want to be the kind of Brother who makes the time to listen
- I want to be the kind of Brother who doesn't get upset when God puts someone in my path who needs some help and helping them is going to totally throw off my schedule
- Because, you know that is how God does it, right?
- I firmly believe that God DOESN'T look at your schedule and say, *"Wow. Looks like Jeff has some free time, I'll bring Brother Bob into his life this evening to confess his Alcoholism, so that Jeff can spend the next few weeks helping him get into a program."*
- It's ALWAYS the other way around...

SLIDE

- God tests your love and commitment to Him by bringing opportunities to serve into your life at the times that are the LEAST convenient!

- God wants to know that He is more important to you than anything else on your Calendar
- And, you remember what God looks like, right?

SLIDE

- Matthew 24:40

40) And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the **LEAST** of these my brothers, you did it to **ME**.'

- Of course, if you were to wake up in the middle of the night to a bright light and a loud and powerful voice saying, *"Jeff! Don't go to that meeting tomorrow. Instead, journey to North Hollywood to a house that I shall show you."*
- You would do it! No questions asked!
- Every one of us are righteous and Godly men, and if the Lord were to call us to go and do His business, then you know we would do it no matter what else we had scheduled

POINT TO THE SLIDE

- But...
- If it's just Jimmy calling you (AGAIN) saying that he's been let go from another job, and doesn't have the money for rent, and needs some help to get out of his apartment by 3:00 pm today so that he can move back into his Mother's place...
- **THEN** it's much harder to drop everything that you had scheduled and go help your Brother...
- That's how God works, though...
- God teaches you LOVE by putting you around UNLOVING people
- It's doesn't take any character at all to love people who are loving toward you
- God wants you to learn the kind of love that Christ felt towards the Jews that killed him
- God teaches you PEACE by allowing times of CHAOS and confusion
- Anyone can be peaceful sitting on a quite beach watching a beautiful sunset

- You learn real peace by choosing to trust God in circumstances in which you are tempted to worry or be afraid
- And, God teaches you PATIENCE by forcing you to have WAIT for things
- I'm a very patient man when things are going my way and everything moves right along
- It's only when I become tempted to get angry or lose my temper that I really start to learn what patience is
- I asked Wilfred once why God put us in Ecclesias
- He paused, scratched his chin, looked up to the Heavens, and replied, ***"To Test Us."***
- That really is the point...
- I used to have this idyllic, frankly immature view that Ecclesias were designed to support, nurture and upbuild us as Brothers and Sisters in our walk to the Kingdom...
- Nah
- I think that God wants to see how we are going to react around others
- God wants you to have fellowship with people just like you... Imperfect, irritating, frustrating people just like you...
- Mainly so that you can learn to truly Love, but also so that you can learn Patience
- Romans 12 is all about the relationship of the Ecclesia to the individual's personal development

SLIDE

- Romans 12:9-12 **NIV**
 - 9) Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.
 - 10) Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. **HONOR ONE ANOTHER ABOVE YOURSELVES.**
 - 11) Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.
 - 12) Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

- ***“Honor one another above yourselves.”***

- For me, where I am right now in my spiritual development, that is the key for me to learn Patience
- My lack of Patience is another way of saying that I think that my time is more valuable than yours, and my plan is better than yours
- I don't have any patience for people that get in the way of me getting done the things that I want to get done

PAUSE

- ***“Honor one another above yourselves.”***

- If I can get myself to think more of others, and less of myself (which will be our next discussion)... If I can get myself to be open to the idea of preferring someone else's agenda over my own agenda, someone else's schedule over my own schedule, someone else's timeframe over my own timeframe...
- **THEN** I can begin to be Patient

SLIDE

- Let's be clear, this may not be a **LOGICAL** thing to do
- My schedule might be better thought out and better planned than yours...
- If I act Patiently, and don't get all up in your face, we very well may be late and miss Dinner
- But, that really is the point, isn't it?
- Life really isn't about being on time for the Dinner Reservation...
- Life is about me learning how to be more like God and our savior Christ
- Life is really about me learning how to be Patient!

PAUSE

- Patience is preferring one another
- It's not about things going your way
- It's not about you being in control
- Look at the kinds of words that are associated with the idea of Patience:

SLIDE

- Colossians 3:12-14
 - 12) Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, **COMPASSIONATE** hearts, **KINDNESS, HUMILITY, MEEKNESS**, and patience,
 - 13) **BEARING WITH ONE ANOTHER** and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.
 - 14) And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

SLIDE

- **COMPASSION**

SLIDE

- **KINDNESS**

SLIDE

- **HUMILITY**

SLIDE

- **MEEKNESS**
- This is the exact opposite of me storming back into the house from the garage where I've been sitting in the car for 10 minutes and yelling at my wife because she's going to make us late to Church
- I'm a good Christian!

- I don't want to be late to Church (*Or, maybe I just don't want others to see me being late...*)
- So, I storm into the house and I yell at my wife! Because I'm a Good Christian!
- *What's wrong with this picture?*
- Look at the next phrase after the word Patience, I think it's important...

SLIDE

• **BEARING WITH ONE ANOTHER**

- That's the point, right?
- Patience is about putting up with each other
- Literally, Bearing with one another...
- We see this same idea also connected to Patience in Ephesians 4

SLIDE

• Ephesians 4:2-3

- 2) ...with all humility and gentleness, with patience, **BEARING WITH ONE ANOTHER** in love,
- 3) eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

- God has placed you in a family full of imperfect humans
- God has placed you in a job full of imperfect humans
- God has placed you in an Ecclesia full of imperfect humans
- And, He wants you to be Patient!
- It's going to require some serious "*Bearing with one another*" isn't it?

SLIDE

- It's not about you being right!

SLIDE

- It's not about you proving that you are right!

SLIDE

- It's about you learning Patience
- It's about you learning to take the back seat even when you know you are right
- Unless it's a matter of life and death, learn to follow someone else's lead, learn to adhere to someone else's schedule, learn to take the slower, clearly less intelligent path just because someone else wants to
- Bear with them...
- In the process you will BE with them!
- You will be there – In the moment – Relaxed and ready to help them through whatever happens to come up
- It won't be the most efficient, it won't achieve the goal of you getting the most done...
- But, it might just help to save a soul, and it will definitely serve our Lord's purpose of developing you into the kind of person that he wants
- There is quite a bit of faith involved in this process...
- You have to actually believe that there is more value in learning how to be Patient, than there is in getting done the thing that you wanted to do instead
- Trusting that God has something there for you beyond the plans that you've made for yourself
- Of course, we are familiar with this concept, from the famous verse in Romans 8:

SLIDE

- Romans 8:28

28) And we know that for those who love God **all things work together for good**, for those who are called according to his purpose.

- But, it's the trusting in it part that is the hard part
- My lack of Patience is born out of a clear and definite belief that what I have planned to do is important, and that my time is limited, and that I need to really capitalize on the time that I have
- Trusting in God means that I have to come to believe that He knows what is best for me, and that He will direct my paths
- He will plan my day
- He will control my schedule
- He will interrupt me at His will
- AND I need to learn to appreciate and value that...
- There is a good example in 1st Samuel of someone who didn't trust God to wait and do it His way
- We see Saul, who takes matters into his own hands, and doesn't trust God to work in His life at the speed and pace that God wants
- Let's look at that story real quick...

SLIDE

- 1st Samuel 13:8-10
 - 8) He **waited seven days**, the **time appointed by Samuel**. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the **people were scattering** from him.
 - 9) So Saul said, "Bring the burnt offering here to me, and the peace offerings." And he offered the burnt offering.
 - 10) **as soon as he had finished** offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came. And Saul went out to meet him and greet him.
- In Saul's defense, look at how long he waited!

SLIDE

- **Saul WAITED SEVEN DAYS**
- Seven Days!
- I'd find it really hard to wait around seven hours for Samuel to show up!
- Notice whose schedule he was following also:

SLIDE

- **The TIME APPOINTED BY SAMUEL**
- It was Samuel that had set the appointment! **HE** was the one that was late! Not Saul!
- And now, the reality of the situation starts to set in...
- We deal in Reality
- God tends to deal with Ideals
- Look at what was happening...

SLIDE

- **The PEOPLE WERE SCATTERING**
- Things were falling apart here!
- Something has to be done!
- Someone has to step up and take responsibility for the situation because clearly Samuel is not going to be here by the time that he stated he would be, and the people are starting to get understandably anxious and are starting to wander off
- These are facts
- This is reality
- This is honestly what is happening

- Saul isn't being unrealistic
- He isn't making things up in his head
- He was on time
- He was there, and he was seeing people lose heart and wander off
- Have you ever been in a similar situation where you see members of your Ecclesia straying from the Truth because of the lack of action of the Ecclesia's leaders?
- You would want to take action in that circumstance, right?
- And, of course...

SLIDE

- **AS SOON AS HE HAD FINISHED offering the burnt offering...**
- Isn't that always the way that it is...
- You are patient, and patient and patient until finally things begin to completely spiral out of control, and you feel that you just have to step in...
- And as soon as you do... Bam!
- That is exactly how Saul felt
- Look at his excuse when Samuel comes and confronts him:

SLIDE

- 1st Samuel 13:11-12
 - 11) Samuel said, "What have you done?" And Saul said, "When I saw that **the people were scattering** from me, and that **you did not come within the days appointed**, and that **the Philistines had mustered** at Michmash,
 - 12) I said, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the favor of the Lord.' So **I forced myself**, and offered the burnt offering."
- Everyone else is responsible!

- Except him!

SLIDE

- **The people** were scattering!

SLIDE

- **You** didn't come on time!

SLIDE

- **The Philistines** are mustering!

SLIDE

- ***So I forced myself***
- I didn't want to, but you really didn't leave me any other choice...
- I just couldn't wait any longer!
- But, alas...

SLIDE

13) And Samuel said to Saul, "**You** have done foolishly.

- **YOU** HAVE DONE FOOLISHLY

PAUSE

- It's easy to point the finger at Saul because he shows himself in so many other areas of his life to not be a Godly man
- But, if I'm honest with myself, I don't think I would have shone through in this story as a paragon on Patience either
- The challenge is to face the reality of the situation around us, regardless of how others are living up to their commitments, and regardless of how the people around you are reacting to the circumstances

- And still show faith in trust in God that you will follow His schedule, His agenda and His commandments, and not take matters into your own capable hands
- The process itself teaches us Patience
- It's hard, but that is how we develop the character of Christ

SLIDE

- Romans 5:2-4
 - 2) Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.
 - 3) Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that **suffering produces endurance,**
 - 4) and **endurance produces character,** and character produces hope
- So, learning Patience is a lot more than learning how to sit quietly while you wait
- It turns out that it's not really about idly biding the time
- For me, It's an important part of learning how to treat my Brothers and Sisters, and learning to trust in my Heavenly Father

SLIDE

- 1st Corinthians 13:4
 - 4) **Love is patient** and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude.
- For me, learning to be patient is all about learning to be in the moment with the people who are around me, and attentive to trying to find out how I can serve them
- For me, learning to be patient is about learning that my time isn't more valuable than their time
- Learning that although I like to stay busy in the work of the Truth, what I want to get done isn't more important than what the least of my Brothers or Sisters needs from me
- Learning that if I want to be a faithful, righteous, virtuous Christian, then I have to be patient with the people around me

- Regardless of my own personal opinion about how important their requests from me are

SLIDE

- 2nd Peter 1:5-8

- 5) For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge,
- 6) and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness,
- 7) and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with **LOVE**.

SLIDE

- 8) For **if these qualities are yours** and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.